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NEWS RELEASE

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For Immediate Release

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USDA RURAL DEVELOPMENT EMPLOYEES HELP FAMILIES IN WENDELL

Thursday, June 16, 2005 – Wendell, Idaho – Members of the Twin Falls Rural Development Office as well as several from the State Office in Boise gathered in Wendell to assist a group of 7 families with laying the sod at their new homes in Wendell's Ambrose Subdivision.

The families have been building their homes since last fall when ground was first broken at the subdivision. It truly is a team effort for all of the families as no homeowner can move into their home until all of the dwellings are complete. They work at least 30 hours a week until all of the homes are ready for occupancy.

The Mutual-Self-Help Program through Mercy Housing Idaho receives funding from USDA Rural Development for technical assistance during the construction and then at the completion of the homes, the homeowner applies to Rural Development for a direct low-interest mortgage through the 502 Housing Program. The program gives them the opportunity to put in their own sweat equity, which means by helping build their own homes and there immediate neighbors homes in the same project, they are able to move into a home that will probably appraise at over 25% higher than the amount of their mortgage loan.

Today's landscaping party was sponsored by USDA Rural Development, First Federal Bank and Mercy Housing Idaho. _____ people participated in the event. For more information on upcoming self-help opportunities, you can contact Julie Galbraith at 208-737-1470 or LaDeane Brown at 208-734-1324.

USDA Rural Development's mission is to deliver programs in a way that will support increasing economic opportunity and improve the quality of life of rural residents. As a venture capital entity, Rural Development has invested over \$50 billion since the beginning of the Bush Administration to provide equity and technical assistance to finance and foster growth in homeownership, business development, and critical community and technology infrastructure. As a result, over 800,000 jobs have been created or saved through these investments. Further information on rural programs is available at a local USDA Rural Development office or by visiting USDA's web site at <http://www.rurdev.usda.gov/id>.

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